says Mr. Elmes (and with this we take leave of his book, and ask for him the consideration of the public), "let any one who undervalues either the talents or the genius of Wren, and there are such, even in the profession he so raised, adorned, and honoured, mount the dragon's back, on Bow Church, descend through the varied courses of masonry, their curious and scientific junctions and bondings, the columns and arched buttresses, adorning and supporting at once, from finial to foundation: let them ascend the mystic windings, from the bottom to the top of St. Bride's steeple; the vaulted roofs, and geometrical intricacies between the two cupolas of St. Paul's, and discover the hidden mysteries of the *catenaria*, which pervades its section, and upholds the cupolas, cone, and lantern, as one self-supporting body, of that wondrous edifice, which contains less material than Westminster Bridge, as M. Labelye, the architect of that failing erection, boastingly asserts, in his published account of it: let them search into his earliest work, the before-mentioned roof of the Sheldonian Theatre: let them, in fact, examine any of his works: or, let them look at and admire Professor Cockerell's beautiful pictorial combination of our great master's works, arranged in harmony around the majestic St. Paul's, like the Muses around Apollo, and say—who is the man able to dim the unassuming genius of Christopher Wren?"

ARCHITECTURUS TO HIS SON.*

THE LAMP OF MAKING A LIVING: CONCLUSION.

In admitting into our question of making a living a special consideration of the present system of "architectural competitions," I am descending to particularity for, as I think, a weighty cause. There seems to me to be in the whole range of universal living-making no parallel to this system,—nothing so insidiously ruinous: and but for such a fact I should not have embraced in my scheme any allusion to it. I have heard men more than once thank God they were not architects, on account of it. I have myself, in the midst of success, experienced invariably its unmitigable mischievousness. I see an admirable and hitherto highly honoured profession going down to ignominy with this foolish fallacy in its right hand; and no consolation can I find but that when things are at the very worst they must speedily mend.

In the first place I perceive in this system an interruption of the balance of power in the contest of emulation in business. The three great powers, Genius, Plodding, and Quackery, as I have said, start pretty fair; and with all their various degrees of combination and all their various phases of activity, the world wags generally well enough between the three. Although the race is not always to the swift, neither the battle to the strong, yet it is pretty commonly so at all events; and if genius not unfrequently overleaps its strength, and plodding often dies before its turn comes round, depend upon it quackery quite as frequently is caught in its own sly snare—the worst discomfiture of all.

The deluded victims of this system of ours are often to be found arguing that its tendency is to give an advantage in the contest of life to that which deserves it best—genius. It brings talent into notice, say they; and their own talent being supposed to be quite indisputable, they hope against hope till their funds are gone and their walls covered with rejected efforts of their—*genius*. Whereas the fact is notorious, that no one can hope for any success in the system till he acquires experience in it—the knowledge, by experience, of its *trickery*, so as to bear up against the trickery of those who in merit are inferior or equal, and then to defeat the non-trickery of those who in merit are superior. The tricks of competing architects are legion. What mean those mighty packing-cases in some such trumpery affair as a workhouse school,—filled with great frames of plans and elevations and perspective views, mighty in size and still more mighty in red paint—as if painted by the sun himself in drink,—estimates of cost in ticket-writing on the corner,—gold frames, inflated descriptions, cunning mottoes,—what mean all these? Is this the encouragement of *genius?* To be sure, plodding, for one of the three, is most effectually discouraged; but that which is encouraged, as I see it, is the third contender, quackery, and no other at all. Genius has no chance, except he is up to the mark in quackery—in all its puffery, trickery, falsity, sycophancy, treachery, and often more, according as the case requires; be assured of it.

But it is no such motive as the encouragement of genius which prompts the worthy patron of architecture for the nonce in advertising a competition. It is the perfectly honest motive to have the most for his money—the best design he can get. I am satisfied that in the great majority of cases the idea that favouritism prevails is a fallacy. The honesty, on the contrary, is all on the side of the said patron, so far as that goes, and the dishonesty all on the other side, as a general rule. His object is to choose the best design; and, as far as his own utterly incompetent judgment can choose, he chooses fairly.

The architect has nothing to complain of on this score. There may be exceptions; no doubt there are; but from all I have been able to gather, I am satisfied that if there were never one, the system would be not one whit the less obnoxious in its working. That which is rooted in poisonous soil bears poisonous fruit; false at the beginning, you cannot find truth at the end; rotten at the core, any semblance of health that the face may bear is but delusion inevitably.

And therefore, I say, I should like to be informed of any case where a competition introduced an employer to satisfactory services, or an architect to satisfactory employment, except in cases which comprehended some correcting element, equivalent to an abandonment of the principle. For the relation of client and adviser, mark you, is here entirely reversed; and it is manifest if so, that either that recognised relation must be wrong or its reversal must. An architect is a confidential adviser and agent in an important and difficult matter, to whose judgment the employer must, of necessity, submit his own, its superiority to his in that matter being the fundamental idea of the agency. And can you not see that the principle of the employer constituting himself, as the first step, the arbitrary judge of this the architect's judgment, even if he were far better than he generally is, some such thing as a popular pork-butcher at a poor-law board, to whose eye a plan is about the same as a page of Sanscrit,—must be directly incompatible with the submissive confidence of client towards adviser? Left to himself the worthy pork-butcher would inquire of some authority for a respectable "artchitect," and in his hands he would cheerfully leave the whole affair. He who is his own lawyer, every pork-butcher knows, has a fool for his client, and so, he will acknowledge, he who is his own architect must have what may be called a donkey for his. But if it is suggested to him that for the expenditure of seven shillings and sixpence in an advertisement he can obtain fifty or more elaborate designs cheerfully, eagerly, thankfully, most humbly submitted for his choice, who can blame him if he accepts the offer? And who can charge him with more than the everyday infirmity of our nature if he feels proud when the "candidates" and their friends call upon him at his shop to make his acquaintance and show him their plans; or if he offs with his sky-blue wrapper, polishes up his honest face with it, ons with his quality-coat, and shrieks a parting war-cry—"what'll ye buy—buy—buy."—with something akin to magnificence, as the eventful hour arrives for the "board meeting on the plans;" or if he surveys the gaudy array of "drawrings" with the consciousness that great things are expected of him—care, discrimination, firmness, "hindependence," and the like; or if, when he has at last fixed upon the "drawring," which has the best and brightest "red and white," like his own meat, and the bluest sky, like his own wrapper, he intimates his decision that it is "stunning," in indefinite terms, and withal somewhat dogmatically—"what I sees I sees, and what I sees I sticks to;" or if, when the owner of the successful "mottar" is brought in by the beadle with the same reverential awe with which he brings in a refractory pauper to hear his fate, he looks upon the owner of the "mottar" with a slight tincture of supremacy; or if, in his future communication with this "indiwidual," the good man is inclined to act with that authority which is due to the position so cheerfully, eagerly, thankfully, most humbly accorded to him; or, if, therefore, he deals stringently with this most humble servant, and expects that he doff his hat to him, and "blows him up" occasionally, and "sends for him" to his shop, and threatens "to report him," if he takes the fancy? O good shade of Vitruvius! "what is of the highest importance, the architect should not be occupied with the desire of grasping everything in the shape of gain, but by the gravity of his manners and a good character, he should be careful to preserve his dignity."

Exceptions, I fear, only prove the rule; the legitimate relation *in limine* reversed, the transaction which is begun in assumption on one side, and sycophancy on the other, proceeds in arrogance and degradation to the end, and concludes with mutual censure, resentment, and deserved shame. There are cases in which a competition for an important prize before competent judges, especially where national honour and championship are the stake, is no doubt to be made productive of benefit and success; but for our profession in the present manner to bow the neck to the ignoble foot of every common anonymous advertiser is alike unworthy of their humanity, and suicidal to their interest.

Much might be said on the subject in various aspects; but let me briefly show you, as a matter of profit and loss, how ludicrous it is arithmetically.

Suppose a body of men settle together on such a thing as an unoccupied field in Californian diggings. Suppose they spend no end of time and money in competing for allotments or the like. What is the commercial consequence? The profit they compete so much about would all have come into the body inevitably; and a great deal more,—for they have lost much time and wasted much money to no profit, in mere wrangling. All that results is a disturbance of the legitimate system of activity, and if one by chance obtains a seeming advantage, let him count the outlay before he congratulates himself, and consider whether the time and money spent, even by himself individually, might not have been after all spent more profitably. With us, all that is secured by competition falls to the body at any rate; much money is unproductively spent which might surely have produced profit somehow, if properly applied; and much energy is wasted which, if directed to the legitimate objects of originating new sources of profit and pushing forward the employment of the profession in unoccupied ground, would unquestionably have produced satisfactory results, as everyday business everywhere shows. And the man who at the end of the year can put his hand on the greatest number of successful results, I have no hesitation in saying, would have made more (by such talent as secured this) if it had been legitimately applied and "competition" had had no being: and *à fortiori*, therefore, of every other competitor, I say the same.

Fortunately for the efforts of men of this nineteenth century in living-making, it is scarcely possible to find any analogy in other departments of business whereby to illustrate the peculiar follies of this present system of ours. Were we not ourselves so accustomed to it, we should see in it, as all the world besides see in our own case, with amazement, a principle so extravagantly preposterous that analogy, otherwise so useful, can only weaken the fact. A wicked world is ours in many things, I grant; and so keenly doth it

* See page 140, *ante*.

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